

Greg Porter

Indiana State Representative, District 96



Summer, 2001

Dear Friends:

The 2001 long session of the Indiana General Assembly has ended with the passage of a new state budget and several other important pieces of legislation. I am pleased we completed our work on time in a bipartisan manner.

The new two-year state budget includes increased funding for education, CHOICE and other important programs while avoiding a general tax increase. The budget also includes funding for several important local projects that are detailed inside this newsletter.

We passed several other laws that will benefit our state in a variety of areas, including health care, education, crime, election reform and environmental protection. We made improvements to our license branch operations and passed legislation that will protect consumers from annoying telephone calls with the establishment of a do-not-call list. I have described many of these new laws in the next few pages.

In addition, you will find a map of our new 96th legislative district. We are required to redraw the district boundaries every 10 years due to population shifts. I welcome those of you who are new to the district and look forward to working with you in the coming months to make Indiana a better place to live.

Please contact my office if you have additional concerns or questions about state government. You may e-mail me at H96@ai.org or call my Legislative Assistant, Benjamin Moore, at 232-9995.

Sincerely,

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Inside

•The new budget

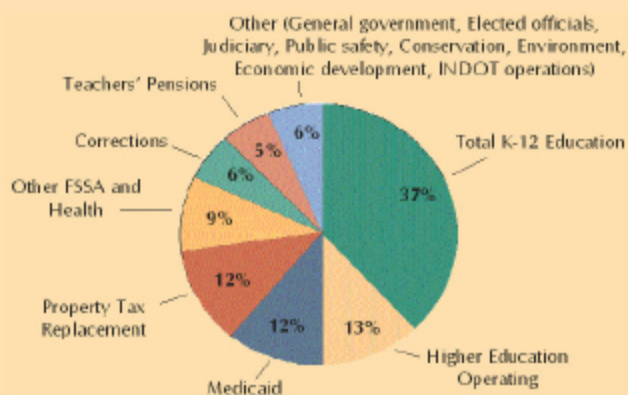
•New legislation

•District map

•Local funding

New budget increases school support, local development

Spending highlights from the 2001-2003 budget



Going into the 2001 legislative session, many observers felt that a sluggish economy would make it difficult to enact a biennial state budget without either passing a general tax increase or cutting funding for critical areas like public education. However, the budget bill that became law continues our record of avoiding general tax increases, while providing additional state support to our schools, health care and local projects.

The final version of House Enrolled Act 1001 enables the state to increase support for public schools across Indiana by an average of 3.5 percent each of the next two fiscal years, with minimum guarantees built in to help schools avoid cutting programs and personnel. Funding for higher education was increased by an average of 3.2 percent each year.

Services and local development

The budget includes additional funding for the CHOICE program that provides in-home care services for the elderly and disabled, as well as Build Indiana Fund support for research and technology, community wastewater and drinking water grants, airport development and improvements to voting systems.

Tax relief

It was disappointing that we were unable to provide the levels of tax relief that were included in past state budgets, but I am pleased that we were able to extend the life of the homestead credit at 10 percent and maintain the earned income tax credit that assists working families on lower incomes.

Businesses and farms will receive an income tax credit on personal property beginning in 2003, and mobile homes have been changed to be treated as real property with similar deductions. The budget bill continues to fund a statewide property tax relief program that now takes about 16 percent off all property taxes. When coupled with the 10 percent homestead credit, that translates to savings of around 26 percent.

A bill the size of the budget does not contain everything I would like, but considering the fiscal restraints facing legislators going into the 2001 session, I feel this budget is a major accomplishment.

Charter Schools bring opportunity to Indiana

The Indiana General Assembly has passed a law making Indiana the 38th state to enact charter school legislation. Furthermore, Indiana has the seventh best charter school legislation in the country. Our charter school law carefully balances:

- School board authority with responsible innovation.
- Parental choice with taxpayer protections.
- Teacher quality with flexible preparation.
- School employee rights with individual choice.

Indiana's charter school law specifies that:

- All charter schools would be public schools; no private school could become a charter school.
- Only non-profit organizations could organize charter schools.
- Existing public schools could become charter schools only by a petition of teachers and parents.
- All collective bargaining rights for school employees in any existing public school are fully protected.
- All due process rights for school employees in any existing public school are fully protected.
- Teachers would have the right to a representation election in "new" charter schools.
- All teachers would be fully licensed and certified as the teachers in any other public school.
- School boards could sponsor charter schools.
- Public universities, which offer 4-year degrees, could sponsor up to 20 charter schools, then the Department of Education would make recommendations regarding further university sponsorships.
- The Mayor of Indianapolis could sponsor up to five charter schools per year in Marion County, subject to city-county council approval.
- Any student could attend a charter school. For students who do not live in the district where the charter school is located, the parents must declare that the charter school offers an academic advantage for the student; the school board can appeal to the State Board of Education the student's transfer to the charter school; in conversion charter schools, the school board determines the capacity of the charter school to accept non-district students.
- Charter schools must abide by academic standards and accountability requirements.
- Charter schools must abide by public records and open meeting requirements.
- **Charter schools must abide by public bidding and common wage laws if they use public funds.**



New laws give you more control over health care

In the 2001 legislative session, lawmakers were able to build on the reforms passed in recent years that grant patients a larger voice in decisions affecting their health care.

Senate Enrolled Act 365 gives patients a chance to appeal care decisions for all accident and sickness insurance coverage to an outside panel of medical professionals. Senate Enrolled Act 310 requires insurers and providers to use easily understandable language to describe procedures and diseases, and Senate Enrolled Act 311 requires insurance companies to pay so-called clean claims — those properly submitted and containing all needed information — in a timely fashion.

Disabled Hoosiers will be able to make substantial strides toward achieving self-sufficiency and preserving health care coverage through HEA 1950, which establishes a statewide buy-in program that would assure Medicaid coverage for workers with disabilities.



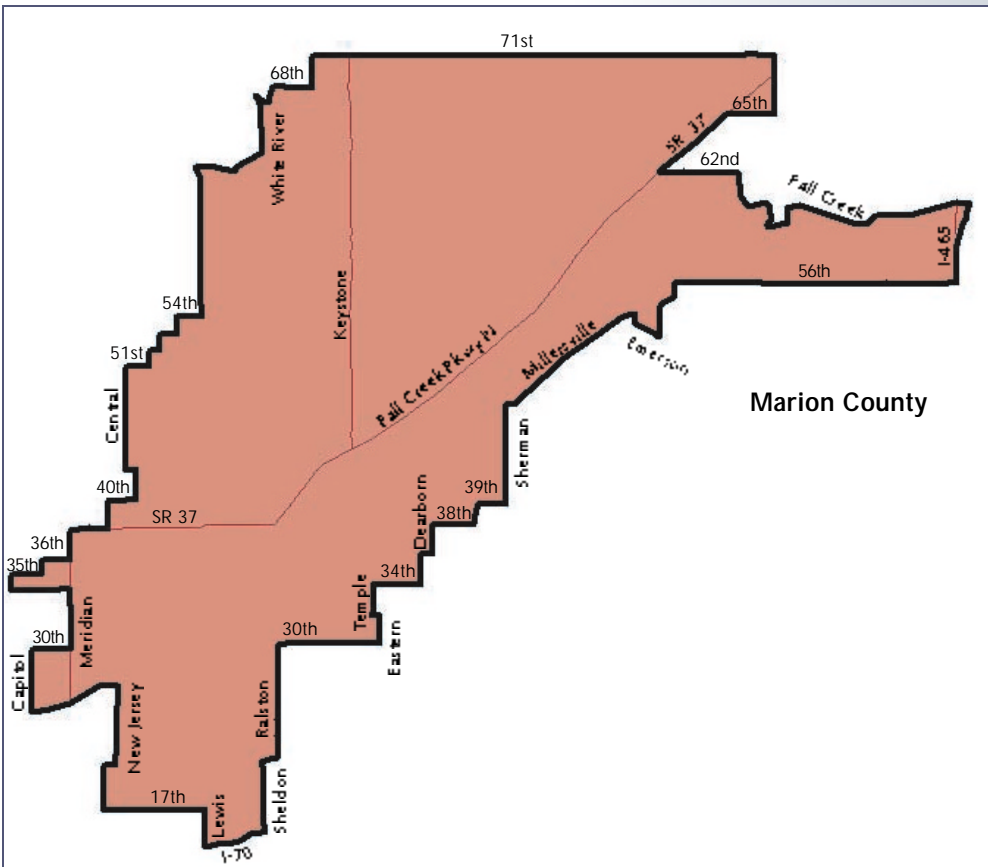
REP. PORTER DISCUSSES LEGISLATION WITH REP. BILL CRAWFORD (D - INDIANAPOLIS).

Build Indiana Funds go to District 96

Since the Hoosier Lottery began in 1989, a portion of the earnings has gone to local development. Listed below is money awarded to our district for 2001.

Destiny	\$25,000
Barn Project	\$50,000
Neighborhood Youth Brigade	\$50,000
Near North Dvlpt. CDC	\$25,000
Daysprings	\$25,000
Mapleton Fall Creek	\$50,000
St. Florian Center	\$25,000
PECAR Health Center	\$110,000
Meridian Kessler CDC	\$25,000
Reach for Youth	\$20,000
Center for Leadership Dvlpt.	\$25,000
Building Block Academy	\$20,000
Childrens Museum	\$25,000
—Star Point Program van	
Historical Landmarks Found.	\$25,000

The new look of District 96



During this year's session you may have heard about redistricting in the news. After each census, the Indiana General Assembly is required by law to redraw House, Senate and Congressional district boundaries according to population changes.

Each district must have 60,000 people, which means that as the population moves to or from various parts of the state, boundaries shift to reflect that change. District boundaries are very complicated, and it took months of effort and debate among legislators to reach a consensus. In the end, however, I feel that the district lines we have drawn are as fair as possible.

For both the current members and those new to the district, I look forward to serving you. Please contact me if you have questions about the district or any other matters.



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Privacy from telemarketers and election reform

Stay informed about these
and other issues online with
Representative Porter



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In 2001, lawmakers took steps to help reduce the interruption of telemarketers calling you at home. Through House Enrolled Act 1222, you will be able to have your name placed on a do-not-call list that will **prohibit most solicitors from contacting you via the telephone**. To be placed on the list, contact the Office of the Indiana Attorney General about the **Telephone Privacy List at 1-888-834-9969**.

In the wake of the confusion that took place in the presidential election in Florida last fall, lawmakers in Indiana moved quickly to enact reforms that will change the way we handle elections here.

Senate Enrolled Act 268 gives counties the ability to enter into agreements with the state to purchase **upgraded voting equipment**. This allows counties to take

advantage of the state's ability to purchase large amounts of equipment and materials at discounted prices. Funds contained in the biennial state budget will help the state provide 50 percent matching grants to further reduce those costs. The same legislation also **eliminates the use of punch-card voting** in future elections.

Through provisions contained in House Enrolled Act 1510, the state has moved closer to improving voter registration in Indiana. The Indiana Election Division will make a **voter registration form available on the Internet** that people can download, fill out and mail in to be processed. The legislation also strives to update lists of eligible voters by removing names of people who are deceased and convicted felons who are in prison.